

CIA's Turner Strikes Back

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH U.S. INTELLIGENCE CHIEF

Adm. Stansfield Turner, 54, an Annapolis classmate of President Carter, left as commander in chief of NATO forces in Southern Europe to take over the crisis-ridden CIA in February, 1977. A graduate of Amherst College and a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, Turner headed the Naval War College from 1972 to 1974, after commanding a carrier task force.

interference in other people's governments—political action—is as useful a tool for this country. We're not eschewing it completely, but we're downplaying it.

These changes require a shift in the way the operations of the directorate of operations is organized and run. I believe that we needed to reduce the size of that organization—and I find nobody out here who's informed who disputes the fact.

Q Are you "going overboard" in your reliance on technology rather than traditional spying to do the job, as some critics have complained?

A Quite the reverse. Everything I am doing is designed to emphasize improved human intelligence collection.

One of the things that I have done in the past year is to stimulate increased interest and attention on the part of the top policy makers in the Government in what human intelligence collection can do for them. And they're giving us lots of support in that direction, and more guidance as to what they want.

That's what helps to make good clandestine intelligence collection. You want to collect what people need, not what you think is important.

Now, the advent of new technological means of collecting intelligence is one of the factors that is creating change in the process of intelligence in a very substantial way. The trouble is that, in a general sense, technical intelligence tells you what happened yesterday.

Ever since the Battle of Jericho in Biblical times, the human intelligence agent has helped you to find out what's likely to happen tomorrow. I find that the more technical intelligence data I give to the policy makers, the more often they ask me what is going to happen tomorrow—the intentions of the

other side. And I must turn to the human intelligence people of the CIA for those answers.

So, contrary to the implication of your question, the advent of better technical collection has led to greater demands for the kind of collection which is done by the human intelligence element.

Q What about the allegations that you are destroying morale in the CIA by getting rid of so many people in such an abrupt manner?

A There have been lots of complaints because nobody likes to be asked to leave.

My measure of basic morale, however, is that I see no drop in the dedication, in the quality of the work of these employees. They're a most dedicated, capable lot of people. I have not seen a drop in the quality of the work. When you make as many changes as I believe are necessary in our over-all intelligence operations today to adapt to the times—to modernize—you're bound to have grumbling.

I am totally convinced that there is wide consensus in the Central Intelligence Agency that these changes are generally needed. I don't say that everybody agrees on the exact form and the exact timing and so on, but the idea that we must move forward into a new concept, a new age of intelligence, is universally accepted.

Q But aren't spies and people operating undercover abroad a special breed who require special handling?

A They certainly do. They're a wonderful group. But we must have a new and modern personnel-management system here—and this reduction is part of a move in that direction. Very frankly, it's long overdue.

We have not in the past planned a career progression to insure that we will have new blood coming in to replace these dedicated, marvelous people who are leaving. We had a wonderful influx in the late '40s and early '50s of most-capable, dedicated people. Two things are different today:

First, these people have gone through the system, and we've not programmed their replacements.

Secondly, they came into the Agency in a period of cold war—a period of great dedication after World War II—and they were willing to sacrifice and work. Today I think you have to give better incentives, better rewards to

young people in their early 30s to get them to stay in this career. I am trying to remove enough at the top to create more opportunities so that there will be young people coming forward with adequate training and with an added incentive to make this a career.

I would rather have a short-term morale problem among these disaffected people whom we have had to ask to leave. I'd rather have them disgruntled for a very short period of time than I would to have a long-term, gnawing morale problem existing in the bowels of this organization, where the future lies.

Q Are you at all concerned about the possibility of any of these disaffected people compromising the CIA—or even engaging in work with hostile groups?

A I'm not at all concerned about these people who have been dismissed being traitors to their country. They're dedicated, loyal people who have served well for their country. Two thirds of them have served long enough to retire, and will be pensioned immediately upon leaving the Agency. I can't imagine those people being disloyal or subjecting themselves to the danger of conducting treason.

I am most disappointed, however, at the lack of professionalism that some of them have shown by going to the media with their personal complaint against me and against the fact that I have had to bite what is a difficult and unpleasant bullet in carrying through a retrenchment. That is unprofessional, and it reflects the worst fears of the American public about the Central Intelligence Agency—namely, that its operators will not respond to duly constituted authority.

And I am pleased that, if we had people like that in the Agency, they are gone, because I will not tolerate people who will not follow the duly constituted leadership. This organization must be under full control at all times. Before this planned reduction, I fired five people because they were not under control. The minute I found out about it, they went out the door. There's no mincing words on that one with me.

Q As you see it, Admiral Turner, how does the reorganization announced by the White House on January 23 strengthen our intelligence system?

A It's a major step forward for the country. It emphasizes that the policy

makers must get involved with the intelligence process in terms of setting the priorities for what we should do.

Beyond that, it gives to the Director of Central Intelligence enhanced authorities to insure the adequate co-ordination of the entire intelligence apparatus of the country, because there are a number of agencies and quite a few people involved. Particularly with the changes in the ways we collect intelligence today, there is a great need for better co-operation.

Under this new executive order, I will be permitted to task all the intelligence-collection agencies of the Government that are funded in the national-intelligence budget. This will exclude intelligence activities funded in the defense budget—such as an Army lookout on a hill, or a tactical airplane, or something like that.

Secondly, I am given authority to put together and present to the President the single national-intelligence budget and to make the recommendations to the President on what we should be buying, how many people we should have, how much operating funds that we need for the entire intelligence community.

I think that this new authority will still leave independence where it's needed within the intelligence community, but provide centralized control where it's been lacking.

Q Under the reorganization, will you, in effect, become the "intelligence czar"?

A As Director of Central Intelligence, I will have greater authority than that position has had before. At the same time, there are clear limits on that authority—particularly, there are limits over the interpretation of intelligence.

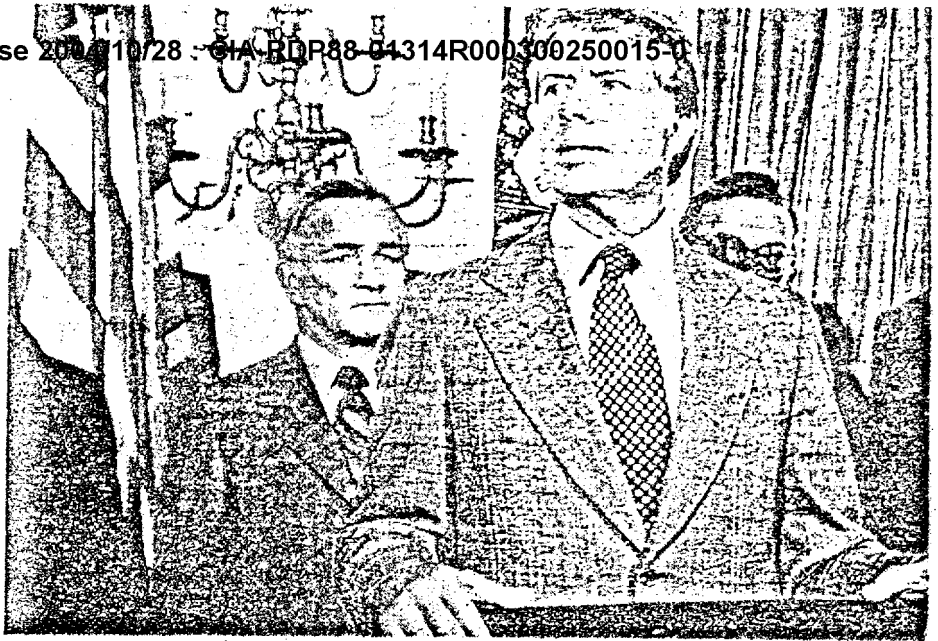
The last thing that any of us want is a single individual who can determine what the interpretation of the intelligence data is to be.

When it comes to interpretation of intelligence, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research are quite independent of the Director of Central Intelligence. We meld interpretations together and see where we differ. But I have no authority to tell them how to interpret—how to analyze the information.

Q What is being done to guard against the kinds of abuses by the intelligence community that have been so widely publicized in the past few years?

A Well, I think abuses have existed but have been grossly exaggerated.

Over the last several years, we have established in this country some very fine controls. They amount to what I call "surrogate public oversight." The problem is that the



Admiral Turner listens as President Carter announces an executive order that expands the CIA Director's control over foreign-intelligence operations.

see the intelligence agencies as it does the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Commerce or other agencies that work in a more or less unclassified atmosphere.

So, instead, we have oversight in the executive branch by the President and the Vice President and by the National Security Council, which, under the new executive order, has certain oversight responsibilities—for instance, preparing an annual report on how we're doing and what we're doing.

Then there is the Intelligence Oversight Board—three distinguished American citizens—appointed by the President to look into the legality and the propriety of our intelligence activities and to report directly to the President.

Outside the executive branch, we have the oversight of two committees of the Congress dedicated just to intelligence. They're a big help to us. They keep us sort of in tune with the American public. I think that's where the intelligence community has gone astray before: They were a little bit too isolated. Going up and testifying on Capitol Hill regularly keeps you from being isolated.

Q Can you run an effective intelligence organization when you must tell so much to congressional committees?

A Yes, I believe we can.

The committees have shown a tremendous sense of responsibility—a tremendous sense of restraint—in not getting into such operational detail that would endanger lives of people or the ways we do things, but still getting into adequate detail to conduct the kind of oversight that they need.

The next year or so will be very important as we and the Congress work out the next step in this process after

charters establishing statutory controls over our activities. The degree of detail in those charters will be very important to our future.

I anticipate a spirited but friendly and co-operative debate with the Congress over the next few months in just how those charters are drafted.

Q Admiral Turner, given the enormous amount of money that this country pours into intelligence activities, why did the CIA underestimate the Soviet grain crop by such a wide margin?

A First of all, we're not perfect, and we're not Avis—we're No. 1, but we're still trying hard.

It is not unusual for the Department of Agriculture to miss the long-range forecasts of the American grain crop by 5 per cent. We missed the Soviet crop by 10 per cent. Because of reasons of classification, I can't tell you all the reasons we missed it by 10 per cent.

But I can assure you that getting detailed information in a country that hides something that is really of global importance and impact—as the Soviet grain crop is—is not easy. It is particularly difficult when, in the last month of the season, they had a very bad weather situation there, which we think is largely what tipped the difference.

Let me say, though, that we did predict that the Soviets were buying grain and would continue to buy grain, and, as a result, the market did not jump markedly or significantly after the announcement was made of what their harvest was going to be. So we think we did serve the American public even though our prediction was wrong.

We'll always miss one here or there. If those are the worst that we missed, I'm reasonably happy. But I don't want to say that I'm happy that we didn't do well on this. We are certainly going to try harder and harder.

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